By Carolyn Lee

The Imperial Republican

Flu is here and it's ahead of schedule, according to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). Lab tests confirmed influenza B in Douglas County.

"Flu showed up a little early this season," said Dr. Joann Schaefer, Nebraska's Chief Medical Officer and Director of Public Health for DHHS.

"Make sure getting vaccinated is at the top of your to-do list. Flu vaccine not only protects you, but your family, friends and coworkers, too."

People in Chase County had the chance to drive and get a flu shot last weekend. "Drive-in" flu shots were given by nurses at both the Imperial and Wauneta clinics.

Rhonda Sargent, Clinic Office Manager, said 26 people took advantage of the offer in Imperial and 15 in Wauneta.

The clinics are offering "family nights" later this month. At the Imperial clinic, shots at $25 will be given from 4-6:30 p.m. Oct. 22. In Wauneta, the shots will be given from 4-6:30 p.m. Nov. 1.

Sargent said the family nights are for people with commercial insurance or those who pay for themselves. Those with commercial insurance must present their cards, and their company will

pay for the shots.

Shots may also be administered during regular clinic hours at both clinics. Sargent said there is no shortage of vaccine this year.

There have been no flu cases reported at either clinic, she noted.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends flu vaccine for everyone six months and older. It takes about two weeks for the body to build immunity following the shot.

People at greater risk for complications from influenza include young and older people; people with chronic lung disease like asthma and COPD, diabetes, heart disease, neurologic conditions and certain other long-term health conditions, and pregnant women.

DHHS officially started flu surveillance Sept. 30. Surveillance shows where the flu is and how fast it’s spreading across the state.